United Nations A/54/913–S/2000/560

General Assembly
Security Council

Distr.: General
12 June 2000
English
Original: French

General Assembly
Fifty-fourth session
Agenda item 31
Cooperation between the United Nations and the Organization of African Unity

Security Council
Fifty-fifth year

Identical letters dated 12 June 2000 from the Permanent Representative of Algeria to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and to the President of the Security Council

I have the honour to transmit to you herewith the communiqué issued today by the office of the current Chairman of the Organization of African Unity concerning the proximity talks held in Algiers from 30 May to 10 June 2000 with the delegations of Ethiopia and Eritrea (see annex).

I should be grateful if you would have this letter and its annex distributed as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda item 31, and of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Abdallah **Baali**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

00-47571 (E) 130600 130600

Annex to the identical letters dated 12 June 2000 from the Permanent Representative of Algeria to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and to the President of the Security Council

Communiqué issued by the office of the current Chairman of the Organization of African Unity concerning the proximity talks held in Algiers from 30 May to 10 June 2000 with the delegations of Ethiopia and Eritrea

On the occasion of his visit to Ethiopia and Eritrea last month, Mr. Abdelaziz Bouteflika, current Chairman of the Organization of African Unity (OAU), issued a communiqué on 26 May 2000 in which he:

1. Welcomed the decision by Eritrea to respond positively to his appeal to withdraw its troops from Bada and Burrie, following its withdrawal from Zalambesa at the request of OAU.

2. Noted with satisfaction the commitment by the two parties to:

(a) Redeploy their respective forces to the positions held prior to 6 May 1998 in the case of Eritrea and prior to 6 February 1999 in the case of Ethiopia, in conformity with the Modalities and without prejudice to the final status of the territories concerned, which will be determined at the end of the delimitation-demarcation process;

(b) Settle their border dispute in conformity with the Framework Agreement and the Modalities, on the basis of the relevant colonial treaties and of applicable international law, through delimitation and demarcation with the assistance of the United Nations Cartographic Unit and, if necessary, through arbitration;

(c) Pursue negotiations under the auspices of OAU with a view to finalizing the consolidated technical arrangements and thus achieving the implementation of the peace plan constituted by the Framework Agreement, the Modalities and the consolidated technical arrangements;

3. Emphasized that the proximity talks scheduled to begin in Algiers on 26 May 2000, in which Ethiopia and Eritrea had agreed to take part, should put an effective end to the fighting between Ethiopia and Eritrea and provide an opportunity to finalize the peace plan and proceed to its implementation, with a view to a peaceful, fair and lasting settlement of the conflict between the two neighbouring countries.

The proximity talks actually began in Algiers on 30 May 2000 with the participation of the delegations of Ethiopia and Eritrea, headed by their respective Ministers for Foreign Affairs, Mr. Seyoum Mesfin and Mr. Haile Weldensae. The talks, conducted by Mr. Ahmed Ouyahia, Special Envoy of the current Chairman of OAU, also enjoyed the active support of the European Union, represented by Mr. Rino Serri, Special Representative of the Presidency of the European Union on this issue, and the United States of America, represented by Mr. Anthony Lake, that country's Special Representative on this issue.

The statement issued by the Council of Ministers of Ethiopia on 31 May 2000 announcing that Ethiopia had regained control of the territories administered by it prior to 6 May 1998 and that the war was therefore over was welcomed with relief by OAU, which viewed it as encouraging progress towards a peaceful, lasting settlement of the conflict between Ethiopia and Eritrea.

The proximity talks were intended to resolve the various practical aspects of the implementation of the peace plan, beginning with the withdrawal of Ethiopian forces from positions taken by them since 6 February 1999 and ending with the settlement of the border dispute on the basis of colonial treaties and applicable international law, through delimitation and demarcation and, if necessary, through arbitration.

However, at Ethiopia's request and with Eritrea's consent, it was agreed to first finalize a ceasefire agreement and then negotiate and finalize a second agreement on the other outstanding issues.

In negotiating the ceasefire agreement, it was placed on record that:

1. The two parties undertake to respect a number of basic principles, namely:

(a) That the present crisis and any other dispute between the two countries must be settled by peaceful, legal means, in conformity with the principles set forth in the Charters of OAU and the United Nations;

(b) That force cannot be used as a means of imposing a solution in the event of a dispute;

(c) That the borders inherited on independence must be respected, as stipulated in resolution AHG/Res.16 (I) adopted by the OAU Summit held in Cairo in 1964, and in this regard that those borders must be determined on the basis of the relevant colonial treaties and of applicable international law, using technical means to demarcate them and, in the event of a dispute, having recourse to an appropriate arbitration mechanism.

2. The two parties undertake to end their hostilities as soon as the ceasefire agreement is signed.

3. Eritrea agrees that the withdrawal of Ethiopian forces from positions taken since 6 February 1999 should take place once the United Nations has deployed a peacekeeping force under OAU auspices.

4. Eritrea agrees to the adoption of security guarantees designed to reduce tensions and establish a climate of calm and confidence and also to create conditions conducive to a peaceful, lasting settlement of the conflict through the delimitation and demarcation of the border. These conditions concern the creation of a security zone in Eritrea designed to separate the forces of the two countries following the withdrawal of Ethiopian troops to the 6 May 1998 line.

5. The two parties agree that the peacekeeping mission should ensure that the various measures outlined above are put into effect and that they are observed until the border delimitation and demarcation process is complete.

Despite these many points on which Ethiopia and Eritrea were in agreement, on the evening of Thursday, 8 June 2000 there was still disagreement on two points,

one being the exact definition of the security zone between the forces of the two countries and the other being certain aspects of the composition and functioning of the international peacekeeping force.

Anxious not to let the two parties miss this precious opportunity to achieve peace, the office of the current Chairman undertook to submit to the delegations of Ethiopia and Eritrea on Friday, 9 June a draft ceasefire agreement embodying the points on which agreement had already been reached and compromises on the two points of disagreement mentioned above.

The Eritrean delegation informed the office of the current Chairman of OAU that the Government of Eritrea formally accepted the ceasefire agreement. This acceptance was confirmed in writing.

The Ethiopian delegation, for its part, notified the office of the current Chairman of its Government's acceptance in principle of the ceasefire agreement, but requested a short time to enable its national leadership to take a solemn decision on the agreement, which the two parties will then sign in Algiers.

On behalf of all Africa, Mr. Abdelaziz Bouteflika expressed profound satisfaction at this encouraging development, which gives the continent's peoples and leaders reason to hope that calm and peace will be restored between Ethiopia and Eritrea, two fraternal, neighbouring countries, thereby enabling them to finalize the settlement of their border dispute.

Pending the signing of the agreement drafted in Algiers and hence the entry into force of a formal ceasefire, the office of the current Chairman of OAU urges Ethiopia and Eritrea to show the utmost restraint in order to put an immediate end to the armed actions still taking place on the ground. It also urges the international community to encourage the two parties to pursue this wise course of action.

Lastly, the office of the current Chairman expresses its profound gratitude to the European Union and the United States of America for the active, full support which they have given to OAU during this mediation process.